

# The Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto

We believe that every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances.

We define learning outside the classroom as:

***“The use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning.”***

These, often the most memorable learning experiences, help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. They influence our values and the decisions we make. They allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.

***“There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is not learning from experience.”***

*‘Archibald McLeish’*

## ***What is our vision for young people about?***

Learning outside the classroom is about raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about **what** we learn but importantly **how** and **where** we learn.

### **What we learn**

As we are all aware, education is more than the acquisition of knowledge. Improving young people’s understanding, skills, values and personal development can significantly enhance learning and achievement. Learning outside the classroom is not an end in itself, rather, we see it as a vehicle to develop the capacity to learn. It provides a framework for learning that uses surroundings and communities outside the classroom. This enables young people to construct their own learning and live successfully in the world that surrounds them.

There is strong evidence that good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the concepts that span traditional subject boundaries and which are frequently difficult to teach effectively using classroom methods alone. It provides a context for learning in many areas: general and subject based knowledge; thinking and problem-solving skills; life skills such as co-operation and interpersonal communication.

### **How we learn**

Much has been learnt in recent years about how the brain works and the different ways in which we prefer to learn. Research suggests the need to re-engage learners with the world as they actually experience it. This is often called ‘experiential’ or ‘authentic’ learning.

In recent years teachers have been exploring ‘learning how to learn’ in order to raise achievement. What we see, hear, taste, touch, smell and do gives us six main ‘pathways to learning’. Young people are intensely curious and should be given the opportunity to explore the world around them. The potential for learning is maximised if we use the powerful combination of physical, visual and naturalistic ways of learning as well as our linguistic and mathematical intelligence.

**It is clear that to be successful and meaningful, better provision needs to be made for learning through experience in the world outside the classroom.**

### ***What are the educational benefits?***

By helping young people apply their knowledge across a range of challenges, learning outside the classroom builds bridges between theory and reality, schools and communities, young people and their futures. Quality learning experiences in 'real' situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects and to develop better personal and social skills.

When these experiences are well planned, safely managed and personalised to meet the needs of every child they can:

- Improve academic achievement.
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning.
- Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments.
- Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people.
- Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment.
- Nurture creativity
- Provide opportunities for informal learning through play.
- Reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance.
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation.
- Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty.
- Provide challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk.
- Improve young people's attitudes to learning.

Giving young people responsibility for achieving these outcomes helps them to learn from their successes and failures. Learning outside the classroom provides support for many different curriculum areas. For example, all young people have an entitlement to do fieldwork as part of their geographical studies. Linked to the curriculum, these activities provide direct and relevant experiences that deepen and enrich learning.

### ***How does this fit with key education priorities?***

Learning outside the classroom provides a powerful route to the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, in particular enjoying and achieving, staying safe and being healthy. Much learning outside the classroom will take place as part of programmes that support personalised learning and complement the strategy for young people set out in 'Youth Matters'.

### ***When does learning outside the classroom take place?***

It can happen at any time - in the normal school day, before and after school, during weekends and holidays.

### ***Where does it take place?***

The simple answer is that a wide range of environments can be used anywhere outside the classroom. Some commonly used places are:

**The school grounds:** These areas are a rich multi-faceted, learning resource on the doorstep. They offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play. School buildings can also provide a useful resource for learning about energy use and waste for example.

**The local environment:** The locality around school harbours a wealth of opportunities within walking distance. Learners can develop the skills to explore their local environment. This can enrich all areas of the curriculum, for example through land and streetscapes, sites of special scientific interest, heritage sites, places of worship, theatres, live music events and involvement through citizenship activities like local volunteering projects.

**Places further afield:** As young people mature, they are able to gain confidence in and appreciate more distant and challenging environments. For example, through visits to urban and rural places that contrast with their own environment: outdoor, field study and environmental centres; theatre workshops and places of worship; farms and gardens; museums and galleries; places that reflect the world of commerce and technology. These can be planned into all aspects of the curriculum and, by taking learners out of their normal environment, stimulate curiosity and imagination.

**Residential places:** Staying away for a few days or more is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self esteem, communication and team working. For instance, through staying at field study, outdoor and adventure centres; involvement in cultural and arts festivals; taking part in expeditions, summer camps and sports events, and through cultural, language and fieldwork visits abroad.

### ***Who should be involved?***

A recent public consultation has highlighted the value of learning outside the classroom. This Manifesto can involve everyone who sees the benefits to young people. That means Government, Head teachers, governors, teachers and support staff, parents, local authorities, community and voluntary organisations, curriculum subject bodies, businesses and all those agencies that provide external support to schools. By working together, we can help all young people to benefit, especially those whose circumstances make it more difficult for them to participate.

### ***What is the purpose of our vision for Learning Outside the Classroom?***

Our shared vision is open for anyone to sign up to - schools, early years settings, youth groups, clubs, local authorities and children's services, parents, and young people, and all those that support them.

#### **Its purpose is to:**

- Act as a statement of common intent that will make better use of our individual and collective resources.
- Encourage more widespread use of educational opportunities outside the classroom
- Inspire schools and those organisations that support learning outside the classroom to provide high quality experiences for all young people
- Set out a shared agenda for future activity, which recognises that real progress will depend on the cooperation and collaboration of all signatories.
- Make it easier for more organisations and individuals to see how they can best contribute
- Inform the development of government policy
- Call on others in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to work in partnership with us to deliver our aims.

### ***How can you support Learning Outside the Classroom?***

#### **Endorsement**

To begin with, we urge you to endorse and champion the Manifesto. As signatories you recognise the value of learning outside the classroom and, through this shared statement, seek to promote these values to others. You are committed to working in partnership with each other to achieve these collective priorities and do this for the benefit of all young people now and in the future. Signatories to this new and powerful vision are coming together as a national body to take forward the actions set out below.

## **Pledges**

Whatever your interest in learning outside the classroom, the role of this Manifesto is to *'make a difference'*. So we ask you as an individual or an organisation to pledge your support by making public the actions you intend to take. The partners that have helped draw up this Manifesto have made their intentions clear by pledging action:

### ***What actions will we, as signatories, take?***

- 1. We will provide all young people with a wide range of experiences outside the classroom, including extended school activities and one or more residential visits**
- 2. We will make a strong case for learning outside the classroom, so there is widespread appreciation of the unique contribution these experiences make to young people's lives.**
- 3. We will offer learning experiences of agreed high quality.**
- 4. We will improve training and professional development opportunities for schools and the wider workforce.**
- 5. We will better enable schools, local authorities and other key organisations to manage visits safely and efficiently.**
- 6. We will provide easy access to information, knowledge, expertise, guidance and resources.**
- 7. We will identify ways of engaging parents, carers and the wider community in learning outside the classroom.**

See the signatories and their pledges at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/learningoutsidetheclassroom) etc. The website provides details of how you can sign up and make your own pledge.

### **Provide all young people with a wide range of experiences outside the classroom, throughout their education.**

All young people should have regular and meaningful learning experiences, which are focused and enjoyable. They should have well-planned activities, which provide a continuing and progressive programme from 0-19 and allow them to participate in ways that are appropriate to their needs.

Children's services, early years settings and schools have a central role in planning learning outside the classroom into their management, curriculum, teaching and learning, extended services and professional development. Those that support these services are key to providing the help, expertise and resources needed.

#### **We will:**

- Provide inspiring activities that meet the needs of all young people, whatever their age, ability or background.
- Ensure these activities offer first hand experience of the world outside the classroom, practical and relevant learning and progression across key stages.
- Provide a range of experiences that help develop key life skills, including personal, learning, enquiry and thinking skills; and that deepen and enrich subject learning

### **Make the case for learning outside the classroom, so there is widespread understanding and acceptance of the unique contribution these experiences make to young people's lives**

We strongly support the educational case for learning outside the classroom. If all young people were given these opportunities we believe it would make a significant contribution to raising achievement in national curriculum subjects, in the five outcomes of Every Child Matters and in the expectations of Sustainable Schools ( [www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools) ). Research reports published by a number of bodies over recent years all carry similar strong messages about the benefits.

Better access to published research would make it easier to find the evidence to persuade others of the benefits. It would assist policy makers in government and elsewhere in identifying where further research would be valuable.

**We will:**

- Continue to develop the evidence base to support and guide the development of learning outside the classroom and to spread best practice nationally and internationally
- Support Action Research that encourages teaching and non-teaching staff and all those who support young people between the ages of 0-19, to explore differing approaches.
- Develop communication tools for a range of audiences to promote the benefits of learning outside the classroom and highlight the contribution it can make to raising achievement

**Offer learning experiences of agreed high quality**

Quality can be the defining factor influencing participation in learning outside the classroom. Activities have to be carefully planned. Well taught, they should extend learning before and after the event. Just as important as the quality of individual activities, is planning learning outside the classroom into the curriculum, and teaching and learning more widely so that it can provide a regular and frequent diet from 0-19. In this way knowledge, skills and understanding can be progressively built up.

The quality of leadership and management, curriculum, teaching and learning, health and safety and equality of opportunity needs to be monitored and evaluated. Working in partnership, schools, local authorities and those that support them will be better able to provide high quality experiences. Agreed quality assurance, recognised and trusted by schools, will encourage more activity outside the classroom.

**We will:**

- Work together to develop and acknowledge ways of assuring quality of provision and safety requirements.
- Develop 'quality marks' to signify high standards.
- Work together to provide examples of a well-planned learning outside the classroom curriculum with built in continuity and progression.
- Develop strategies to enable local authorities to monitor quality and impact of learning outside the classroom

**Improve the quality and availability of training and professional development for schools and the wider workforce**

Many of those working with young people recognise the benefits of out-of-classroom learning experiences as an essential part of teaching and learning; others feel they lack the confidence, expertise or time to prepare and deliver such activities. We want everyone involved to recognise the value of learning outside the classroom. Professional development needs to be fit for purpose and relevant to the user, taking account of the roles of staff in schools, early years settings, local authorities and organisations that provide opportunities and resources. We strongly endorse its inclusion in Initial Training and in Continuing Professional Development.

**We will:**

- Support practitioners to use learning outside the classroom confidently and capably
- Develop accessible and well publicised opportunities that meet the needs of teachers and others at different stages in their careers
- We will work with training institutions and the Training and Development Agency for Schools to improve the quality and availability of training

- We will work together to provide new opportunities that build on existing good quality provision, for example, Education Visit Co-ordinators training.
- We will work with appropriate organisations to develop subject based and accredited provision

### **Support schools, early years settings and local authorities to enable them to manage visits safely and efficiently**

We applaud the expert work in keeping millions of pupils safe outside the classroom every year. The educational benefits should remain the driving force for learning outside the classroom. However, it is recognised that there are potential hazards in school grounds and the wider environment and that there is a need to take appropriate action to manage risk wherever it might occur.

Responsibility for pupil safety mainly rests with the school, which should ensure that staff have received appropriate training and that policies and guidance are followed. The role of the local authority, head teacher and Education Visits Co-ordinator is central to the sensible management of any risk. It is also vital that young people learn how to manage challenge and risk for themselves in everyday situations, so they become confident and capable adults.

#### **We will:**

- Keep safety management practical and proportionate, which includes keeping safety-related paperwork to the necessary minimum
- Produce clear guidance for keeping young people and staff safe on visits
- Work together to encourage teachers and external providers to show clearly and simply how they meet health and safety standards, and share expertise and best practice
- Encourage the use of 'safety badges', showing that external providers manage safety appropriately, so schools can use them without seeking more detailed assurances.

### **Provide schools, early years settings, local authorities and the wider workforce with easy access to information, guidance and resources**

There are many sources of information, support, guidance, and resources available in many different places. It can be difficult for school staff to find what they need, and to judge whether what is offered will meet the needs of pupils. Co-ordination at local or regional level can provide an invaluable service to schools, helps reduce duplication of effort and brings providers together to offer more effective support.

Some local authorities and regions are already working strategically to provide support to schools and other interested parties. There are also examples of national on-line services. Good practice is also being spread, for example, through subject associations and non-governmental organisations. This is helping more schools to be consistent in adopting safe standards.

#### **We will:**

- Ensure school staff and others have easy access to the information, guidance and resources they need to prepare lessons and to organise and lead activities.
- Encourage partnerships that build the capacity of schools and those that support them.

### **Identify ways of engaging parents, carers and the wider community in learning outside the classroom activities**

Parents, carers and community volunteers give essential support and without them many activities would not take place. Their contribution can greatly enrich the learning experiences of pupils and bring added value to many activities. This applies especially to off-site visits where schools may need extra adults to

supervise the number of pupils involved. Engaging parents and others, helps develop a sense of community and spreads knowledge and understanding of the value of learning outside the classroom.

**We will:**

- work with others to communicate the benefits to parents and the wider community so that there is a greater understanding of its value and importance and a greater awareness of safety standards.
- Encourage parents and carers to actively support learning outside the classroom and to get involved in organising and running activities including family learning activities.
- Develop guidance for the community/voluntary sector.
- Aspire to involve parents and carers in training opportunities.